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AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
ARGUMENTS
CONTAINED IN
DR. MACLAINE'S ANSWER
TO
SOAME JENYNS, Esq.
ON HIS
VIEW of the INTERNAL EVIDENCE of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

WITH
GENERAL THOUGHTS and REFLECTIONS thereon.
By the Rev. EDWARD FLEET, Junior, B.A.
of ORIEL COLLEGE, in Oxford.

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MDCCLXXVII.

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CHRISTIAN



General Thoughts and Reflections

By the Rev. EDWARD JENYNS, B.A.
of Great Oriel, in Oxford.

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MDCCLXXV.

ERRATA

- P. 23. l. 20. r. fins
- P. 32. l. 4. r. fictitious virtues,
- P. 36. l. 1. r. defines
- P. 39. l. 17. r. as numerous,
- P. 49. l. 22. r. its *history*
- P. 50. l. 18. *The inverted commas should be closed at "true."*
- P. 55. l. 12. *Leave out it*

EXAMINATION



OF

THE ARGUMENTS

AS the same great end may be sought for by different persons on different principles, and as the evidence of our Holy Religion is the point which both parties profess to keep in view, I need offer no apology either to the public or the persons more immediately concerned, for my present attempt to examine the controversy between Mr. Jenyns and Dr. Maclaine. It is to be lamented that contentions of this nature among the learned, have had a tendency to weaken the faith of many among the vulgar; when so opposite positions are maintained, those who chuse not to be at the trouble of discovery, are frequently content with disregarding the opinions of both the contenders, and forming an inconsistent and improper one of their own. To examine therefore in ge-

neral what has been respectively advanced by Mr. Jenyns and Dr. Maclaine on this head, is my present design: whatever my success may be, the consciousness of having done my duty is a reward which I must feel; as what is wanting in ability, shall at least be supplied by integrity, and a zealous regard for the true doctrines of the Christian religion.

A view of the internal evidence of the Christian religion, seems to be a mode adapted to strengthen our faith by an appeal to the understanding with regard to its intrinsic excellence; there being contained in it, such purity of doctrine, such an injunction of the social duties for the religious conduct of our lives, tending to establish the ease and happiness of mankind, as may truly be said to form a system of morality superior to what it was possible for the mind of man to conceive. Dr. Maclaine seems to think, the Christian religion did not want the aid of this internal view, at least in the manner Mr. Jenyns has treated it—*non tali auxilio*; but

but he forgets that Mr. Jenyns had chosen this way as the most novel, and the least investigated, professing his consent to the more ostensible proofs; and yet Dr. Mac-laine says, that not till the perusal of the whole book, his doubts were dispelled, whether Mr. Jenyns was not sneering, and whether his intentions were upright. One would almost be tempted to imagine that this was a sneer, because there is not the least apparent reason to determine Mr. Jenyns' professions insincere, or partaking of raillery, which I acknowledge with Dr. Mac-laine is highly improper on the gravest and most interesting subject. This view, therefore, of the internal evidence of Christianity, cannot be deemed an ill-judged defence of it; nor can Dr. Mac-laine mean it in any other light than in the mode of treating it, and that perhaps on examination will not be found so liable to objection as he seems to think. For first, if my reason assents to the great truths of the Christian religion from a view of its internal evidence, and from

reconciling the duties enjoined to a sense of its consequent benefit, it is surely an argument why I should be more firm in my persuasion of that belief; for I suppose that it will not be denied, that a conviction from reason paves the way to assent in almost all our opinions, however prejudice and perverseness may deface it; but supposing, as Dr. Maclaine at last allows in Mr. Jenyns's case, that the intention is good and well-directed, still it is a defence, though all the arguments were not demonstrable. Dr. Maclaine's first objection is to Mr. Jenyns's proposition, as the Doctor quotes it, "that the
 "credibility of miracles and prophecies de-
 "pend upon the internal marks of divinity
 "stamped on the Christian religion;" but it may be observed, that Mr. Jenyns only says, that they depend for much of their credibility on the internal marks of divinity stamped on the Christian religion, and afterwards he says in some measure, which is different from a positive and direct assertion wholly. What
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Dr. Maclaine says, seems to be true, that miracles are facts out of the common course of nature, and therefore rest chiefly on testimony ; but that the confirmation of that credibility may arise from internal characters of that religion, is what perhaps may be rather a matter of assent ; and, indeed, Dr. Maclaine seems to acknowledge it in part, for he says, that it prevents objections being raised against miracles, and is a negative argument ; and if so, it may at least be said to prove what Mr. Jenyns asserted, “ that much of the “ credibility of miracles depended upon “ the internal marks of divinity stamped “ on the Christian religion.” But again, though it be allowed, that the miracles prove the doctrine, and not the doctrine the miracles, yet it is necessary that the doctrine be such as by its nature is capable of being proved by miracles : then it receives a sanction by miracles. But as this is allowed by the first and ablest writers, and is exactly parallel to Mr. Jenyns’s assertion, more need not be said to confirm

it ; nor can this mode of reasoning be objected to, without denying the necessity of taking in the nature of the doctrine to be considered, which I suppose no rational inquirer would think just. We find that the greatest and wisest philosophers by the bare light of nature could never attain to a tolerable system of morality, always blending interest with duty ; and most of the Heathen doctors had their vices as well as their virtues, were remarkable for their error, prejudice, vain-glory, and idolatry, as well as admirable for the moral precepts they left the world. But the idea of the infinite perfections of the Supreme, of the difference of good and evil, of the necessary duties of life, and the firm expectation of future rewards and punishments conveyed in the Gospel, is so far above any conceptions drawn from reason and abstract science, that it certainly doth imprint a stronger evidence for miracles, especially as the life of our Saviour and the different observable rules specified of him and his disciples are

are at least wonderful: but, here I would observe, that though his disciples were unable to comprehend the sublime mysteries opened to them by our blessed Lord, so far above the human apprehension, and so contradictory to the worldly notions entertained by them; yet it does not appear they were particularly dull, ignorant, or incapable, as Dr. Maclaine asserts, otherwise than as the doctrine was too pure for human weakness.

Suppose for instance, as a fuller proof, we were commanded in the New Testament, instead of abstaining from murder, to take every opportunity of committing it; that would afford the most convincing evidence, that the miracles intended to prove the sanctity of such a precept were forgeries, because such a precept could not take place, without dissolving the bands of society, and setting each man's hand against his brother. This single circumstance is sufficient to overthrow the whole train of Dr. Maclaine's arguments, though set forth with all the parade of logic and method.

It will not readily be granted, that the internal evidence of a religion (had we no other more demonstrative proof) was insufficient to point out the divinity of that religion ; for, by the same mode of argument, the Being of a God could not be proved by the abundant evidence forced on the senses, and the reasonableness of a self-existent cause ; and yet we find the belief of a God predominant, and almost of universal consent, previous to any revelation, however vague and incoherent was the idea of the perfections and attributes of that great Being. But when Dr. Mac-laine says, that the internal proofs in favour of the Gospel are not only insufficient for the purpose, but rather turn to its discredit, one would scarce believe him serious, though, he says, he shall prove it ; but how far he has done it, will appear to the judicious reader. But, as an attempt to it, Dr. Mac-laine objects to Mr. Jenyns's second proposition, " that the " religion contained in the New Testament " is entirely new both with regard to its " doctrines

“ doctrines and objects, not only infinitely
 “ superior, but unlike every thing which
 “ had ever before entered into the heart
 “ of man.”

I cannot conceive this a proposition liable to objection, for through the whole tenour of the Christian dispensation it is plainly and positively urged : Our Saviour says, “ I tell you many prophets and kings
 “ have desired to see the things which ye
 “ see, and have not seen them; and to
 “ hear the things which ye hear, and have
 “ not heard them.” Luke x. 24. And, indeed, through the whole Scripture the same is evidenced : nor is it paying any respect to the divine word of God to suppose it otherwise, as it is, as Mr. Jenyns observes, the only key to the ways of providence. The Jews expected a glorious and triumphant Messiah : all were astonished at our Saviour’s doctrines; they were entirely opposite to every the most remote idea entertained before, to the best laws and rules which generally terminated in political necessity.

Our

Our Saviour saith, "He that forsaketh
 "not all that he hath, cannot be my dis-
 "ciple." Luke xiv. 33. Was this a
 doctrine that ever before entered into the
 heart of man? was this part of the mora-
 lity of the philosophers? Nay, so hard
 was it thought even by the person who
 asked his Lord, what he should do to in-
 herit eternal life, though, upon the first
 mention of virtues, he replies, "Master,
 "I have observed all these from my youth
 "up;" yet when he was told, that he
 was to sell all that he had, and give to
 the poor, for his treasure was in heaven, we
 find he grew sad, having large possessions.
 Luke xvii. If such doctrines as these were
 thought of, prior to the Christian revela-
 tion; one thing I will assert, undeniably
 true, that mankind were of a far different
 complexion then, from what they are now
 since this divine revelation. If such things
 as our Saviour delivered were not en-
 tirely new, whence should arise that op-
 position to these divine truths; for, if in
 any degree preconceived, it would have
 been

been less difficult to have reconciled the belief of them. That the character, therefore, of novelty is found in the New Testament, I think indisputable. Dr. Maclaine seems rather to dwell on nice precision than established reason; for a miscellaneous bundle, as he is pleased to term Mr. Jenyns's assertions, if founded on undeniable propositions, and those canvassed with fair reasoning, is full as good proof, as a more methodical, systematic arrangement; not but that the words are injudiciously applied to Mr. Jenyns, who really has consulted order and method. If Dr. Maclaine did not dwell on deductions of *Analogy too nicely drawn*, he would not urge, that the divine revelation must not contradict natural suggestions, and the principles of human knowledge; though, he says, just before, that from the imperfection of human knowledge, we cannot pronounce any procedure worthy or unworthy of God's perfections, and that it is agreeable to our notions of the divine benignity that the

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Indians

Indians were enlightened with the knowledge of the truths, and the whole continent of Africa instructed in celestial wisdom ; but many things, says he, appear worthy of God, which, in consequence of relations unknown to us, he may not think proper to effect ; this latter is certainly true, and in consequence it will follow, that Dr. Maclaine contradicts himself by his prior assertion ; for though it is granted, that from analogy of reasoning we may learn that at the winding up of the drama, the wisdom and justice of God, and the ultimate design and intent of providence, and the perfectness of his government will appear, yet it does not follow, that in a state of probation and trial which this life is, that, that analogy should appear in the intermediate will of providence, any more than it follows that virtue and vice should have rewards and punishments annexed to them in this life ; for, by the same argument, Dr. Maclaine may by analogy account for the fall of man from their original state of purity, which

which perhaps he would be somewhat puzzled to do, however dextrous in sophistical delusion. But it seems that there is no entire novelty to be found in the religion of the New Testament, and that it is not totally unlike what had entered into the mind of man: but I imagine, if it can be proved, that revelation expresses what it was impossible without it to discover, then revelation expresses somewhat totally unlike what had ever entered into the mind of man, and that, that can be proved seems evident; for if the duties of religion, the moral obligation of it, and the terms of reconciliation for the sins of mankind, were not conceived before, they must consequently be new, and this is what I shall endeavour to make appear. For taking it for granted, that the philosophers of old placed their happiness, or chief good, in virtue, yet we do not find by the viciousness of their lives they exemplified any regard to it, but that they all contradicted one another in their principles, and it seemed rather to be an exercise

ercise for wit and subtilty, than a regard for the establishment of great truths: besides that they were absolutely ignorant of the doctrines, had no idea of the ultimate design of the Creator, of his attributes or perfections; did they conceive that repentance should operate to make our sins, though as red as scarlet, as white as snow, what idea had they of the method, by which such as had erred and offended God, might again restore themselves to his favour, and the hopes of happiness? It is Christianity alone informs us, how justice and mercy may be reconciled, the sin punished while the sinner is absolved. The gross idolatry they run into is a demonstrable proof, how unequal their thoughts were to scripture language, "who, as St. Paul says, changed
 " the truth of God into a lie, and wor-
 " shipped and served the creature more than
 " the Creator, God blessed for ever."
 Rom. i. 25. Dr. Maclaine says, that the doctrine of immortality, and a future state of rewards and punishments, was taught
 by

by some of the philosophers of antiquity, and so it was; but how? They made indeed speculative professions of such acknowledgement deducible in part from the spiritual nature of the soul, and the abundant other collateral proofs; but even Socrates, when about to leave the world, seems only to suppose it probable: he has his doubts; “Ye, says he, addressing his
 “auditors, continue here; I am going:
 “which has the better part allotted to us,
 “God only knows;” and again, Cicero,
 “Ea quæ vis, ut potero explicabo, non
 “tamen ut certa et fixa sint quæ dixero,”
 I waver, says he; what is most probable, I will tell you, but am not certain—from whence it appears, that the greatest antient philosophers had no clear and distinct idea of the soul’s immortality, much less of the resurrection, and the rewards of the righteous. “All things,” says our blessed Saviour, “are delivered to me of my Father: no man knoweth who the Son is,
 “but the Father; and who the Father is,
 “but the Son; and to whom the Son will
 “reveal

“ reveal him.” Luke x. 22. So head-
 strong are the passions and unruly affec-
 tions of men against the plainest dictates
 of morality, that practice always counter-
 acted their doctrines: how much more
 would it, if they had learned, “ that the
 “ wisdom of this world is foolishness with
 “ God!” 1 Cor. iii. 19. Our Saviour
 says, “ Take no thought for your life,
 “ what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall
 “ drink, nor what ye shall put on. Is
 “ not the life more than meat, and the
 “ body than raiment?” Matt. vi. 25.
 Where had they any lights of this kind?
 were they acquainted with the inexhausti-
 ble treasures of happiness, that God hath
 prepared for them that love and obey him?
 or in what respect had they any such en-
 lightened and pure thoughts as are re-
 presented in the Gospel; and if they had
 not, as has been clearly proved, it un-
 deniably follows, that Mr. Jenyns’s pro-
 position is true, “ That from the Testa-
 “ ment may be extracted a system of re-
 “ ligion entirely new, not only infinitely
 “ superior,

superior,^{vi} but totally unlike every thing that ever before entered into the mind of man. But the worthlessness of the world and all its pursuits, as signified by Mr. Jenyns, is displeasing to Dr. Maclaine, who runs into unnecessary disquisitions about it; for what Mr. Jenyns means must be evident to the slightest observer; and this, like other things which he denies, is inculcated almost in every page of the sacred writings. Our Saviour saith, “ If the
 “ world hate you, ye know that it hated
 “ me before it hated you : If ye were of
 “ the world, the world would love his
 “ own; but because ye are not of the
 “ world, but I have chosen you out of
 “ the world, it hateth you.” St. John xv.
 18, 19. And again, in the sixth verse
 of the xivth chapter, “ I am the truth, the
 “ way, and the life : no man cometh to
 “ the Father, but by me.” St. Paul, in
 his first Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. ii. 6.
 “ Howbeit, we speak wisdom unto them
 “ that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of
 “ this world which comes to nought.”

But Mr. Jenyns has so judiciously quoted many others, and so many have been urged already, that I judge it needless to insist on them; but, that nothing may be wanting, let us see what our reason says. Taking the most advantageous situation in life, how superior are the miseries of it to the enjoyments! the different passions, wishes, disappointments, and hopes, are continually combating with each other. That something still which prompts the eternal sigh, as the poet says, is always wanting; take the proud man, the envious, the covetous, the jealous, the ambitious, what is the happiest condition each can boast of? will he not be ready to grant,

—— “ nemo sibi fortem,

“ Seu ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit, illâ

“ Contentus vivit ?”

How many fatal accidents may stop the thread of existence! how many misfortunes, loss of friends, property, and the like, wound us with continual grief!

View the imperial diadem, view all the lustre and dignity, which in human judgement seems to embrace all the happiness

pines allotted to mortals; you view indeed
 what seems to shine like a blazing meteor;
 but you do not view, what is hid, the
 tempest of cares which accompany them.
 Take in at one view all the low art, cun-
 ning, disguise, treachery, abuse of con-
 fidence, basenesses, iniquity, deceit, fraud,
 and ingratitude, practised without remorse,
 the truth of which every man's experience
 daily convinces him of; and then say, if
 life is not a mere vapour, a brittle and
 precarious thing. We are repeatedly told,
 in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, by the
 preacher, who had experienced every
 change of pleasure and supposed delight,
 that all is vanity. Again, how many and
 numerous are our enemies without cause!
 for who is so happy as to content all? who
 so generally esteemed, as that no one com-
 plains of him? How many are the un-
 grateful returns of false friends! Indeed,
 so general are the causes of anxiety ac-
 knowledged by the best examiners, that
 there is no occasion to repeat them; not
 that I mean to deny the many enjoyments,

and rational satisfactions, chequered in life like sun-shine amidst clouds and rain; but only am speaking to the truth of Mr. Jenyns's assertion, which will appear more forcible by contrasting the incomparable riches of things eternal to things temporal; for, supposing even quite the reverse to what has been asserted, that all was happiness below, yet their being very uncertain, and at best of short duration, must surely be comparatively worthless, much more so when the contrary is the truth. "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand," says the Psalmist. St. James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of glory, which the Lord hath promised," ch. i. 12. And again, 17th verse, "Every good and perfect gift cometh from the Lord the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, or shadow of turning." From Scripture, therefore, and reason, it seems a fair conclusion, that no religion ever drew so just a portrait of the

the worthlessness of the world ; and that comparatively speaking, which seems to be what Mr. Jenyns meant, it may truly and properly be called a worthless world. That no other religion ever exhibited such distinct, lively, and exquisite pictures of the joys of another world, the resurrection and the judgement to come, is equally true, as has been proved by the ignorance of the wisest philosophers ; for in what mists of ignorance were they enveloped respecting the resurrection of the body ! their most perfect conceptions were vague and unmeaning ; indeed, by the bare light of nature, it is not discoverable : nay, since the divine revelation, how many have been the disputes, arguments, and contentions, about it ! But Dr. Maclaine's quibbles about the word *distinct* is really trifling with common sense ; for, though the joys that are said to be at God's right hand for evermore, and which are spoken of as the reward of the righteous, may depend on new faculties and a purer intelligence, and consequently inexpressible to

us in our present state of imperfection; yet to say, that they are not more distinctly exhibited by the Christian religion than any other, is an untrue and erroneous assertion; and yet this is the sum of what Mr. Jenyns lays down. Nor is Mr. Jenyns's assertion less true, that no other has represented the Supreme Being in the character of three persons united in one God; for I think it will not be disputed, that it is not discoverable by reason, and, if not, could not be otherwise known but by revelation; but, as the concurrent testimony of all great and learned writers is to this purport, it would favour of presumption to endeavour further to enforce a truth so readily granted and universally allowed.

Dr. Maclaine says again, that the justice of the divine legislator by the remission of sins without a mediatorial atonement is no more impeached, than that of an earthly prince would be, who from reasons of clemency or prudence mitigates and supercedes without any atone-
ment

ment to government the rigorous execution of penal laws: now, upon this supposition, the mediatorial intercession of our Saviour can never be accounted for; for, if it be equally consistent with infinite justice, which has always been denied by the writers in favour of revelation, it surely is full as reasonable, according to the ideas we have of infinite mercy, that God should pardon without such satisfaction; for, if it was not for the vindication and honour of God's laws, and to shew his irreconcilable hatred to sin, it would be very difficult to prove and render forcible this article of our belief; but the dignity of the person sent is another argument to prove and to convince men of the necessity of obedience, and to deter them from transgressions, that God did not think fit to forgive the sin of mankind, but upon the difficult terms of the death of his own Son; I do not say he could not, because it is supposed God's infinite power can do whatever his infinite wisdom thinks right; but as God has not thought pro-

per, I apprehend Mr. Jenyns's assertion good, that no other religion has ventured to declare the unpardonable nature of sin without mediatorial interposition, and a vicarious atonement from the sufferings of a superior Being. Dr. Maclaine's objections, therefore, are by no means solid, nor tend to invalidate any of the truths contained in Mr. Jenyns's second proposition. Strange as the assertion of Mr. Jenyns may appear to Dr. Maclaine, that our Saviour was the founder of a religion "which is totally unconnected with all human policy, and therefore totally un- conducive to any worldly purpose whatever;" yet, if Dr. Maclaine does not continue to misconstrue meanings, the assertion will not be found liable to much exception, and Mr. Jenyns's ideas of it may be seen by his afterwards analysing the virtues of valour, friendship, and patriotism. That the Christian religion is unconnected with all human policy and government may be made appear by its contradiction to all those aims which are fought

fought for in the world, such as the acquirement of power, riches, greatness, and honours ; such as gratification in luxuries, pleasures, dissipations, and the like ; it may be too harsh a term, when Mr. Jenyns says, it is totally uncondusive to any worldly purpose, as it prescribes many exceeding good rules both for political and social demeanour ; and was the morality thereof observed, it could not fail of having the most happy effects in the regulation of society ; but it is rather to be conceived that by worldly, Mr. Jenyns meant to speak in conformity to what are commonly stiled mere worldly pursuits ; and had Dr. Maclaine noticed Mr Jenyns's meaning, he would not have declaimed so long to no purpose, and found at last what he might at first have seen, the author's fixed idea of worldly, without adding vain ; for by the general terms made use of throughout Mr. Jenyns's book, it is evident to the most superficial commentator, what is the real sense hinted at in his positions ; nor does Dr. Maclaine at all

confute

confute what is urged by Mr. Jenyns, when he tells us, " That he never heard " any body before Mr. Jenyns style generous and magnanimous the actions " that proceed from the love of power, " riches, and honour ;" and so far I agree with Dr. Maclaine, that disinterestedness, generosity, and public spirit, have a better claim to the title ; but will you find that either of these is a motive to incite persons to what are called generous and magnanimous actions ? No ! examine, and you will perceive throughout life, and from the histories of past times, that the love of riches, honour, and power, have been the objects in view of those who, in the opinion of mankind, have merited the appellation of generous and magnanimous. Will Dr. Maclaine tell us, that all have not the reward in view ? No ! he cannot, unless he closes his eyes from the observance of every spring to human action ; and, if not, the consequence is, that Mr. Jenyns has not improperly used the words, nor asserted what may not be proved,

proved, unless Dr. Maclaine can make mankind better; and then I grant his speculative idea is more consistent with the style of generous and magnanimous. One more observation, and then I have done with Dr. Maclaine's remarks on Mr. Jenyns's second proposition. When Dr. Maclaine tells Mr. Jenyns, "it would be harsh to say he does not understand the Scripture," I allow it; but when he adds, it would be much more so to say he does, one would be apt to imagine the Doctor aims at nothing but a little pleasantry through his discourse, for I would not call it an ill-natured sarcasm, as it is quite laughable; but, if he be unawares serious, I would appeal to any judicious interpreter, whether Mr. Jenyns has not with the strictest propriety applied every quotation from holy writ, nay, I defy any person who does understand scripture texts to say he has not; nor, though it would be but equitable retaliation, will I say, Dr. Maclaine does not, but to suit his own argument he seems to be fond of explaining

ing away the meaning of them ; for, notwithstanding the ingenious and subtile mode to refine and accommodate scripture doctrines to the practical wishes of mankind, and to their own particular desires, exemplified by many writers, it will be found in general that the easiest and most natural meaning is the best. Thus when Dr. Maclaine tells Mr. Jenyns, that the sublime declaration of our Saviour made to the Roman governor—" My kingdom is " not of this world"—would sound as well for his cause as any ; he may, and does perhaps tell him, what is true, and it will remain true, notwithstanding Dr. Maclaine's attempts to render it of little effect to Mr. Jenyns's purpose ; nay even what the Doctor allows of it will make for Mr. Jenyns, though he has rather interspersed a little too much concern for the present world, too give a relish to the pursuits of temporal interests ; but I cannot but think our Saviour's meaning more spiritual, than the explanation Dr. Maclaine gives, " that it did not derive its

" origin

“ origin from the effects of human policy,
 “ but from the miraculous interposition of
 “ God alone;” this would not have been
 a new light after so much as had been
 heard before; it seems rather that our
 Saviour declares his kingdom wholly spiri-
 tual; it was a new kingdom he professed,
 consisting in the obedience of men’s wills
 and affections to the laws of God; but
 even as Dr. Maclaine has explained it, it
 will not be found incompatible with Mr.
 Jenyns’s proposition, though, when pro-
 perly paraphrased, it makes much for his
 purpose.

Parallel to this is the doctrine of St. Paul,
 in his Epistle to the Philippians, ch. iii. 7.
 “ But what things were gain for me, those
 “ I counted loss for Christ;” and in the
 next verse, “ Yea, doubtless, and I count
 “ all things but loss for the excellency
 “ of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my
 “ Lord;” and in the 18th and 19th verses,
 “ For many walk, of whom I have often
 “ told you, that they are enemies of the
 “ cross of Christ; whose end is destruc-

“ tion,

“tion, who mind earthly things.” The general idea, therefore, fixed on Mr. Jenyns’s language seems just, and agreeable to the doctrine of holy writ; and I think it must be allowed, that Dr. Macclaine mistakes frequently his meaning throughout the whole; for it cannot reasonably be supposed, that monastic austerity can influence a person in Mr. Jenyns’s public capacity and social correspondence in life, or that he could ever wish to debar us from taking our fill of rational pleasures here; but only to lop the exuberant branches of desire, the better to qualify us for the enjoyment of eternal pleasures hereafter. Mr. Jenyns does not mean to assert that any of the soothing amusements which blunt the edge of misery, or relieve the mind from despondency, are unworthy of a rational creature; or that any social engagements which give life and energy to the soul, and make it return with renovated vigour to a sober composed way of thinking, are inconsistent with religious circumspection and care.

Having

Having thus endeavoured to confute the ideal objections raised to Mr. Jenyns's second proposition, I shall pass on to consider the third, which is, " That from the book
 " called the New Testament, may be col-
 " lected a system of Ethics, in which every
 " moral precept founded on reason is car-
 " ried to a higher degree of purity and
 " perfection than in any other of the
 " antient philosophers in preceding ages,
 " every moral precept founded on false
 " principles is entirely omitted, and many
 " new precepts added peculiarly corre-
 " sponding with the new object of this re-
 " ligion." Now, that the former part of this proposition is true, Dr. Maclaine allows; he also acquiesces in Mr. Jenyns's explanation of what he means by moral precepts founded on reason, namely, " That
 " they enforce the practice of such du-
 " ties, as reason informs us must improve
 " our natures, and conduce to the happi-
 " ness of mankind, such as piety to God,
 " benevolence to man, justice, charity, so-
 " briety," &c. But when Mr. Jenyns
 comes

comes to explain what he means by precepts founded on false principles in the latter part of the proposition, viz. those which recommend fictitious, such as he styles, however admired they may be, valour, friendship, and patriotism, Dr. Maclaine objects, and perhaps with more appearance of reason than to any former position. But let us see what may be said in contradiction to their being Christian virtues, which is what Mr. Jenyns's second argument requires ; for of their being virtues in the common received opinion of mankind, is what no one will attempt to disprove, or at least properly can. Now, with respect to valour, if in general it serves as an engine of oppression, to plunder the weak, to trample upon the humble, and to persecute the innocent, as Mr. Jenyns seems to think, then doubtless it can have little title to a Christian virtue : now, that this is as often the case, as that it is exerted in defence of the humble and innocent, all history will attest ; nor will it avail to say, that this is the abuse of it,

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if it be the general use; for the Christian virtues, such as temperance, sobriety, and charity, are positive; whereas, taking it for granted that valour is susceptible of good effects as well as bad ones, it needs must be ambiguous; nor will Mr. Jenyns's idea of it, in part, as a constitutional virtue, be deemed false or injudicious, unless it can first be proved, that there are not wisely ordained by Providence many partial constitutional endowments to suit the different scenes and stations in human life, which, without a fondness for such, would not be pursued for the general good of society, and the interwoven correspondent benefit of individuals. If there be no different constitutional tendency, then it will be granted the argument on Mr. Jenyns's side is inefficacious; but, as all nature testifies to the contrary, Dr. Maclaine's objections seem rather to be of no force. Does not the specious name of valour give birth to the most unjustifiable measures, and iniquitous undertakings, to vain-glory, ambitious ire, injurious oppressions,

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pressions, severing the almost imperceptible lines of virtue from its bordering vice? Whereas true valour ought to be an aid to virtue, and should consist in a firm perseverance in those actions which are contemporaneous to right reason.

But does the Christian hero exemplify less courage in contempt of danger, in denials, in a conscientious discharge of duty, however opposite to worldly interests? is his mind less prepared for the encountering difficulties, than the imaginary victor, who, for revenge, ambition, or the unstable applause of misjudging minds, rushes with blind force through surrounding attacks with his only solace, the inflexible obstinacy of misdoing? Valour therefore should have for its object reason, as well as difficulty, to make it a moral virtue; and Mr. Jenyns does not object to the praise and honours bestowed on the truly valiant; nor does the religion of the gospel countermand that inward strength and constancy of mind so necessary to the Christian warfare.

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Our Saviour tells his disciples, to be of good cheer, to cast out fear; and in the 15th verse of the xvith of St. Matthew, "Whoever will save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life for his sake shall find it." That this practice to weak nature required fortitude and valour need not be proved, and so far valour is consistent with a Christian; but that turbulent valour, which Mr. Jenyns alludes to, is certainly no less incompatible with the precepts, than with the object, of the Christian religion, which is peace, forgiveness of injuries, and forbearance.

St. Peter, first Epistle, ch. iii. 4. tells us, a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price; and if so, valour, according to the common idea of it, cannot properly be called a Christian virtue. But here, as in other instances, a true definition of the author's meaning would remove the cause and need of arguments, however sophistically urged; and this seems to be equally necessary, to form a right idea of patriotism. If Mr. Jenyns

desires it from modern usage, well may he call it a fictitious virtue; and the constant abuse of this amiable quality and regard for public good may be one powerful reason why it is improper to call it a Christian virtue, as private interest, and the merchandize of iniquity, come cloathed under this garb of meritorious benevolence; for it cannot be denied, but there is something which seems piercingly striking in the character of a patriot, whose breast is glowing for the service of his country, who labours, from a conscientious regard to social duties, to advance the credit, peace, and interest of the public weal, though it should oppose his own. This would be virtue, would be the distinguishing criterion of benevolence.

But still universal charity comprehends more than the partial regard to a country, or the political advantage of a state; not therefore so unaptly is Mr. Jenyns's comparison of it to the partiality of a parish-officer, who thinks injustice meritorious, when

when it promotes the interest of his own inconsiderable village.

Dr. Maclaine observes, that the true spirit of patriotism was perverted by the Romans at the time of our Saviour's appearance, who had transformed their country into a wicked faction against the tranquillity and happiness of the rest: I will not say, how just a view of it in the present æra; but will urge the instability of it, the masks under which it appears, and the comparative littleness of it; I say comparative, in relation to the universal scheme of benevolent regards recommended in the Christian religion against its being a Christian virtue; but must think so far with Dr. Maclaine, that, when really imprinted in an honest mind, it is neither a false nor fictitious virtue; but it is one of those virtues which we are naturally inclined to, from the inherent fondness for that country which cherished us in its bosom, and to that society to which we belong; so that the danger seemed to be least if, by too fixedly adhering to this principle,

ciple, we should lose sight of that nobler and more extensive virtue—universal goodwill and charity to all. That prejudices in favour of this or that particular country were too frequent in our Saviour's time, we may learn from the answer the woman of Samaria gave our Lord, when he asked her to give him drink, "How is it that thou being a Jew askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" St. John iv. 9. And in many other instances may be seen national mistrust and dislike: patriotism, therefore, or the love of one's own country, could not be so properly enrolled amongst Christian virtues. So friendship, though the most gentle persuasive tye which knits together in sacred league the hearts of those who know its value, still is not, as Mr. Jenyns asserts, recommended by the Christian legislator: but why? because Providence has imprinted that fervour of affection in the human breast, which by natural consent gives scope to the virtue, and is left to our choice to use it as may tend to our happiness;

piness; for can there be a more exalted pleasure than to have a friend participating of our joys, taking off the edge of our griefs, partaking as it were of our cares, and upon all occasions affording us counsel and aid? So many are the graceful attributes of this godlike virtue, that all description would be beneath its intrinsic value; surely then it needed not recommendation from the divine founder of our religion to make it palatable, when composed of such strengthening and comfortable ingredients. But alas! friendship, though a word common with most, is but little attended to; true friends are very rarely to be found; whilst false pretenders to that sacred name are so numerous, as real adherents to it are scarce. Where is that man who can fill even his table with true friends? No! degenerate nature, ambition, interest, hope, simulation, craftiness, and the like, are the clues which guide the deceitful tongue to express in fairest form an affection foreign to the heart; so slender is the thread of mutual

benevolence, so imperfect the airy vision of reciprocal charity, that it is more productive of ingratitude than fidelity, and could only perhaps be practised in perfection by the divine author of all charity and benevolence: but otherwise than from the abuse of it, it cannot well be judged a false or fictitious virtue: yet it does not follow from thence that it must be a Christian one. I think it will be allowed that patriotism is less an object of precept than friendship; nor will it appear that Dr. Maclaine has advanced any thing sufficient to disprove it; though he has not admitted the evidence that may be drawn in its favour. By the pleasure which Dr. Maclaine professes to have received from Mr. Jenyns's judicious and sentimental account of the virtues that correspond with the great object of the Christian religion, one would have been tempted to hope that he was relieved from the irksome task of an opponent; but, as there are still objections which obtrude themselves to his mind, it may not be improper

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per further to consider them ; and the first is, the account Mr. Jenyns gives of the Pagan virtues, “ particularly that the most
 “ celebrated Pagan virtues are more opposite to the spirit, and more inconsistent
 “ with the end, of Christian morality, than
 “ even their most infamous vices ; and that
 “ a Brutus and Cato leave the world more
 “ unqualified for, and more inadmissible
 “ into, the kingdom of heaven, than a
 “ Messalina or Heliogabalus with all their
 “ profligacy about them.” Now, though I will grant that this is a pretty full assertion ; yet that there is nothing dissonant to reason, or very astonishing in it, is what I think may be proved ; for, if the Christian religion has prohibited that turbulent and vindictive spirit, and if its doctrines be entirely opposite to lawless resentment ; much more must they be to any kind of homicide, though committed through political fanaticism. Where then is the difference ? For the breach of any of God’s laws must be equally offensive to divine justice ; as St. James tells us,
 “ Who-

“ Whosoever shall keep the whole law,
 “ and yet offend in one point, is guilty of
 “ all.” I say in this case will it not follow,
 that a Messalina or Heliogabalus leave the
 world as qualified for the kingdom of hea-
 ven as a Brutus or Cato? for whether it
 be profligacy, or any other forbidden mode
 of viciousness, it matters not, so as it be
 forbidden — “ Vengeance is mine; I will
 “ repay, saith the Lord.” Rom. xii. 19.
 The actions, therefore, of a Brutus or Cato
 may equally merit the divine vengeance
 as those of an Heliogabalus or Messalina,
 for any thing that can be proved to the
 contrary. Dr. Maclaine says, “ I think it
 “ is hard to take from those who are less
 “ favoured than we are the little they had.”
 It certainly is; and no doubt proper al-
 lowance will be made. But will not this ac-
 knowledgement tend to prove the novelty
 and peculiar excellency of the Christian
 religion, as delineated by Mr. Jenyns? I
 think it will. St. Paul, in his Epistle to
 the Romans, when he says, ch. ii. 7.
 “ Eternal life shall be given to those who
 “ by

“ by patient continuance in well-doing
 “ seek for glory, and immortality ;” cer-
 tainly does not mean that honour which
 Mr. Jenyns says is contradictory to the
 spirit of the Christian religion ; but the
 honourable reward of a Christian’s obe-
 dience, eternal glory ; and so Mr. Jenyns
 explains himself afterwards, by calling
 one an imaginary, the other a real immor-
 tality. Thus having remarked the ma-
 terial objections to Mr. Jenyns’s three pro-
 positions, I shall follow him to the con-
 clusion, where there will be little need to
 dwell long, as most of the principia are
 contained in the foregoing propositions,
 and only an inference drawn of the dis-
 tinguished excellency of the Christian re-
 ligion ; and, indeed, Dr. Maclaine has
 rightly bestowed on Mr. Jenyns the praise
 due for his perfect summary of gospel du-
 ties. Little, therefore, remains to be con-
 sidered as an objection by Dr. Maclaine to
 Mr. Jenyns’s method of defence ; but the
 opening his answer is wrongly supposed
 by the Doctor to give to the cavils of un-
 believers ;

believers ; but let us investigate the truth of the assertion. Some are so bold, says Mr. Jenyns, as to strike at the root of all revelation from God, “ by asserting that “ it is incredible, because unnecessary ; and “ unnecessary, because the reason he bestowed upon mankind is sufficiently able “ to discover all the religious and moral “ duties which he requires, if they would “ but attend to their precepts.” Now, as reason has been already proved insufficient for this purpose, and is granted by Dr. Maclaine, as well as Mr. Jenyns, in their reasonings, it will only be necessary to reflect on Dr. Maclaine’s mode of rectifying Mr. Jenyns’s argument ; which he says, as it stands at present, will expose him to some embarrassment from the quarter of infidelity. Mr. Jenyns says, “ Let “ us turn our eyes on that remote region “ of the globe, to which supernatural assistance has never been extended, and we “ shall there see men endued with sense “ and reason not inferior to our own ; “ so far from being capable of forming a “ system

“ system of religion and morality, that
 “ they are at this day totally unable to
 “ make a nail, or a hatchet ; from
 “ whence we may surely be convinced,
 “ that reason alone is so far from being
 “ sufficient to offer to mankind a per-
 “ fect religion, that it has never yet been
 “ able to lead them to any degree of cul-
 “ ture or civilization whatever.”

Dr. Maclaine says, it is not true that these men, who are unable to make a nail or a hatchet, are endued with sense and reason not inferior to ours. Now, though it be granted that various are the capacities, and wide is the difference, of the genius of individuals, yet there appears no reason why we should suppose a national defect of common understanding ; nor can it even plausibly be accounted for, but by supposing that the same communications of knowledge have not reached the inhabitants who exist in a state of barbarism. But Mr. Jenyns further advances his proof by saying, “ That hu-
 “ man reason in its highest state of culti-
 “ vation

" vation among the philosophers of Greece
 " and Rome, was never able to form a re-
 " ligion comparable to Christianity ;" but
 says Dr. Maclaine, this is saying the thing
 very feebly. Now I should wish to ask
 any attentive reader, whether Mr. Jenyns
 has not particularly dwelt on this be-
 fore? and whether Dr. Maclaine has not
 weakened his present assertions by his
 former arguments? The quotation from
 Mr. Hume's History of Natural Religion
 is also much in favour of Mr. Jenyns,
 and perhaps he may be depended on as to
 historical facts, though a very bad guide,
 as has been sufficiently proved by a learned
 Author in matters of religion. I will not
 argue, that it is not the abuse of reason,
 that, as Mr. Jenyns says, " has persuaded
 " some that there is no God ; others that
 " there can be no future state ; that there
 " is no difference between vice and vir-
 " tue, &c." but if such is the abuse of
 reason left to her own choice, as is true,
 it shews the dangerous tendency of con-
 fiding entirely in her, and infers the
 greater

greater necessity for a divine revelation. Now, Mr. Jenyns tells you, that what is esteemed reason among the learned has been so obscured as to cause these deductions, and in this case he fairly states her influence, and seemingly in an unexceptionable way; nor is his assertion, "that though human reason is capable of progression in science, yet the first foundations must be laid by supernatural instructions," less evident, if we regard it so far as it relates to religion; and this has been abundantly proved: but I do not say, with respect to improvement in arts and sciences, and the common progressions in knowledge, it will be equally admissible. Dr. Maclaine says further, "that it will be impossible to prove that nations which live without government, letters, and laws, have the same natural capacities which the others are endowed with." To this may be replied, that it is most probable they have, and that it will be ever impossible to prove they have not. There seems to be nothing wanting
but

but culture and opportunity of improvement. We may take many in an inferior state in our own nation, who, give them the advantages of education, might shine with first characters in literature and every branch of science, who yet, wanting such aids, are overshadowed with mists and ignorance; and chiefly it will be found true, that, though there may be a particular want of capacity, it will by no means, not even in a kingdom, be found general, nor can a shadow of reason be assigned why there should. The same fondness for partiality seems to dwell with Dr. Maclaine, when he says, “that the end of Christ’s mission was to raise one part of the human race to high and distinguished felicity;” and afterwards adds, “that it was not the design of the Deity, to raise all mankind to this degree.” Now, the universality of the Christian dispensation had, I thought, been admitted by all its followers; and is plainly declared throughout the whole Testament. Our Saviour particularly says, “And other sheep I have,
“ which

“ which are not of this fold; them also I
 “ must bring, and they shall hear my
 “ voice; and there shall be one fold, and
 “ one shepherd.” St. John x. 16. And so
 in various other parts of Holy Writ the
 same is so frequently declared, as to render
 particular quotations unnecessary; but it
 is likewise certain, that the means of im-
 provement, according to our ideas of God’s
 infinite justice, will be regarded towards
 the end, the obtaining eternal life. Dr.
 Maclaine says, in his Postscript, “ He
 “ wishes to curb the spirit of criticism;”
 and it is truly desirable, after so much he
 had before advanced on Mr. Jenyns’s pro-
 positions: but still the Doctor is willing
 to persevere to the end, because he thinks
 there remain objections yet to be can-
 vassed; the first of which is Mr. Jenyns’s
 assertion, “ that the truth of a revelation
 “ is not affected by the fallibility of those
 “ who wrote his history.” Now, this
 Mr. Jenyns professes not otherwise to
 mean, than by a retrospection to the in-
 ternal evidence of the Christian religion,

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because

because it will not be argued, that the fallibility of historians does not affect the credibility of an event in general ; therefore Mr. Jenyns grounds it upon his next assertion, “ that a religion superior to all
 “ human imagination actually exists, and
 “ its intrinsic excellence is a proof of its
 “ divine origin, by whatever means it
 “ was introduced, or by whatever errors
 “ blended.” But, this being a point so much contended for throughout, it would be needless to add further, than that, if there be a revelation from God, it must be the Christian, which, being a truth so well established, will prove favourable to Mr. Jenyns’s assertion. Again ; Mr. Jenyns says, “ Many things which contradict our
 “ reason may be true, which will appear,
 “ I think, to any impartial reasoner ; for,
 “ if we believe nothing but what we can
 “ comprehend by our reason, we shall renounce many great and necessary truths ;
 “ for instance, we cannot comprehend the
 “ form of existence of own soul in the
 “ body, and how by thought and will we
 “ can

“ can raise and move the body ; and yet we
 “ find this true ; and so of many others.”

But let us examine the Doctor's quotation from Mr. Jenyns, “ That three Beings should
 “ be one, is a proposition which certainly
 “ contradicts reason, that is, our reason :
 “ but it does not from thence follow that
 “ it cannot be true.” Now, notwithstanding the very great caution to be observed on so sublime a subject, it cannot be proved Mr. Jenyns has advanced any thing inconsistent ; for, though it is the same divine nature, yet three distinct persons are spoken of in the Holy Trinity, it being no contradiction for three in respect of relation, to be one in respect of essence ; now, if there are three vital subsistencies in the same undivided essence, though but one divine nature, where is the absurdity of Mr. Jenyns's position ? What is infinite, indeed, cannot be comprehended by what is finite ; for, if it could, it would for that reason cease to be infinite. It may be presumption to pry too deeply into the mysteries of the divine nature ; but, when

Dr. Maclaine objects to this plain doctrine of Mr. Jenyns, a reply needs no apology. "That any thing should exist without a cause," says he, "or that any thing should be the cause of its own existence, are propositions equally contradictory to our reason; yet one of them must be true, or nothing could have existed." Without quibbling (and it really is nothing more) about the words *cause*, *effect*, and *thing*, it is impossible to deny this; for either God must have existed for ever, or it is impossible he ever should; for, if he should come into being when he was not, he must have had some cause of his being, and that would be the first cause which was God. But if without an original independent being nothing could be, then nothing can be the cause of its own existence, but must be caused: this we know by reason; but the manner and mode of a self-existent cause is not only contradictory to our reason, but impossible for us to conceive; and yet we may be as sure of the truth of this proposition, as
that

that we know any thing at all ; so God's eternity, omnipresence, and infinity, though not parallel with our reason, are yet true ; which is another inducement to believe, that a thing may be contradictory to our reason, and yet be true ; and so the evidence for Mr. Jenyns's argument will remain unimpeached. Dr. Maclaine seems to argue very justly, when he says, there is no contradiction in prescience and contingency ; for it does not follow, that the nature of a thing is changed by its being known. An infinitely-perfect being must certainly know what may be, as well as what is past, or present ; but it may be observed, that God foresees the actions of free agents, as they will be ; but not that they will be so, because God foresees them. But we are told that nothing is so inconsiderable as to escape the all-seeing eye of the Deity ; not a sparrow falls to the ground, but our heavenly Father knows it, and, as God probably proportions his regard to the object, so HE may have more especial regard for rational creatures, and a parti-

cular providence may be compatible with the natural freedom of men's actions.

I do not see that inconsistency, which Dr. Maclaine dwells on, in Mr. Jenyns's saying, "Reason informs us, that the punishment of the innocent, instead of the guilty, is diametrically opposite to justice, rectitude, and all pretensions to utility;" this I suppose will be granted as true. But Dr. Maclaine adds, Mr. Jenyns contradicts himself by urging afterwards, "That a tax, if voluntarily offered, may be justly accepted from the innocent, instead of the guilty, for any thing that reason can determine to the contrary." But that there is a wide difference between a tax voluntarily offered by the innocent, and a penal infliction on the guilty, is what no rational person can deny: nay, so far is it different, that it by no means contradicts our reason so to suppose, as the honour and vindication of God's laws is thereby established. But, as much has been said on this point before, it may only be necessary to add, that we may be assured, what God
has

has thought proper must be infinitely for the best, and that it will never be right to reject any truth delivered by an infinite and incomprehensible being, because our mode of existence and conception is so inferior, that we cannot comprehend it.

I think now, in the course of these considerations, every material argument has been examined, that has been urged by Dr. Maclaine to invalidate Mr. Jenyns's doctrine, which, as he tells us in his conclusion it was calculated for so wise and good a purpose as to make a few more Christians, ought surely to be regarded if consistent, and the goodness of heart to be commended which prompted the means; for, upon a review, there will not appear, I am persuaded, any thing contrary to the divine tenure of Holy Writ, which ought to be the rule of a Christian's life; and the divine precepts cannot be too lively depicted for the observance of frail nature, which will at best fall short of the standard of Christian obedience. The life of a Christian at present is so much embar-

embarrassed with worldly pursuits, as to leave him little time for abstract thought and religious meditation, so that temporary employments shall be made an excuse for neglect of religious duties. The generality of mankind are so devoid of the outward form, even of piety, that nothing could be more seasonably introduced, than a book of Mr. Jenyns's good tendency to curb and restrain the licentious prevalency of manners, and to promote an attention to the grandest of all points to a rational creature, the securing the favour and approbation of the Supreme Being. Actuated by the desire of investigating truth, and forming a just opinion of Mr. Jenyns's upright intention from his known abilities and integrity, I have ventured to steer thus far in the region of Polemicks, and, by the examination, find I have not been mistaken in my ideas of the pure doctrine contained in Mr. Jenyns's View of the internal evidence of the Christian Religion.

Dr,

Dr. Maclaine's answer to Mr. Jenyns serves only to display the fallacy of nice and subtle delusion, and to strengthen the efficacy of Mr. Jenyns's able pen by the contrast of light and shade; his objections are by no means just, his reasoning scarcely ever solid, nor does his judgement seem consulted. He is constantly mistaking Mr. Jenyns's meaning, and from thence is led insensibly into false deductions. His book will ever be more dangerous in the hands of a practical idler, or a minute philosopher, than Mr. Jenyns's, from whose description of the duties of Christianity no evil can accrue, though it may afford a speculative argument to a deist, easily however to be controverted by an appeal to truth and common sense. I have towards the conclusion of this scrutiny met with a book, entituled, "A Dialogue from a rational Christian to his Friend;" but, as the author's arguments are inferior to Dr. Maclaine's, and have not even ingenuity to recommend them, it need not be noticed,

ticed, as, by refuting Dr. Maclaine, whom other writers of that mode of thinking may look on as the corner-stone, the fabric will be less substantial and durable. Poized by the balance of fame, Mr. Jenyns will find his admirers; for, after all, his book will be found the true means of persuasion for many to become Christians.

F I N I S.



